

**Evaluation of the
Indianapolis Mayor Sponsored
Charter Schools**

**Southeast Neighborhood School of
Excellence (SENSE)
Mid-Charter (Ten Year) Review**

2104-2015 School Year

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION INNOVATION

Office of the Mayor of Indianapolis

MID-CHARTER (TEN YEAR) REVIEW

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence (SENSE)

September 15-16 , 2014

The Indianapolis Mayor's Office Mid-Charter (Ten Year) Review is designed to assess the tenth year of the school, and the third year post-renewal. The Mid-Charter Review Protocol is based on the *Performance Framework*, which is used to determine a school's success relative to a common set of indicators, as well as school-based goals.

Consistent with the Indianapolis Mayor's Office Performance Framework, the following four core questions and sub-questions are examined to determine a school's success:

Is the educational program a success?

- 1.1. *Is the school's academic performance meeting state expectation, as measured by Indiana's accountability system?*
- 1.2. *Are students making sufficient and adequate gains, as measured by the Indiana Growth model?*
- 1.3. *Does the school demonstrate that students are improving, the longer they are enrolled at the school?*
- 1.4. *Is the school providing an equitable education to students of all races and socioeconomic backgrounds?*
- 1.5. *Is the school's attendance rate strong?*
- 1.6. *Is the school outperforming schools that the students would have been assigned to attend?*
- 1.7. *Is the school meeting its school-specific educational goals?*

Is the organization in sound fiscal health?

- 2.1. *Short term Health: Does the school demonstrate the ability to pay its obligations in the next 12 months?*
- 2.2. *Long term Health: Does the organization demonstrate long term financial health?*
- 2.3. *Does the organization demonstrate it has adequate financial management and systems?*

Is the organization effective and well-run?

- 3.1. *Is the school leader strong in his or her academic and organizational leadership?*
- 3.2. *Does the school satisfactorily comply with all its organizational structure and governance obligations?*
- 3.3. *Is the school's board active, knowledgeable and abiding by appropriate policies, systems and processes in its oversight?*
- 3.4. *Does the school's board work to foster a school environment that is viable and effective?*
- 3.5. *Does the school comply with applicable laws, regulations and provision of the charter agreement relating to the safety and security of the facility?*

Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?

- 4.1. *Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?*
- 4.2. *Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?*
- 4.3. *For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support and preparation for post-secondary options?*
- 4.4. *Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?*
- 4.5. *Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?*
- 4.6. *Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?*
- 4.7. *Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?*
- 4.8. *Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?*
- 4.9 *Is the school properly maintaining special education files for its special needs students?*
- 4.10 *Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to English as Second Language (ESL) students?*

COMPLETION OF THE MID-CHARTER REVIEW

As part of its oversight of charter schools, the Mayor's Office authorized Research & Evaluation Resources (RER) to conduct site visits of schools during their second charter review period at years 10 and 13 of the life of the school. The purpose is to present the school and the Mayor's Office a professional judgment on conditions and practices at the school, which are best provided through an external perspective. This report uses multiple sources of evidence to understand the school's performance. Evidence collection begins before the visit with the review of key documents and continues on-site through additional document review, classroom visits and interviews with any number of stakeholders. Findings provided by the site visit team can be used to celebrate what the school is doing well and prioritize its areas for improvement in preparation for renewal. It is the task of the site visit team to report on the following pre-identified aspects of the *Performance Framework* and to assist the Mayor's Office in its completion of the Mid-Charter Review Protocol: ***Responses to sub-questions 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 of Core Question 4.***

The outcome of this review will provide the school with written report that includes a judgment and supporting evidence on various aspects of the school, based on a rubric of indicators¹ developed for each of the four core questions and sub-questions in the *Performance Framework*. The assessment system utilizes the following judgments:

Does not meet standard

Approaching standard

Meets standard

¹ Rubric indicators are subject to revision by the Mayor's Office.

The Evaluation Process

This report represents an evaluation about performance in each of the standards and indicators that are the responsibility of RER to evaluate. These indicators: 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 are outlined in the Performance Framework.

Research & Evaluation Resources staff engaged in a number of evidence-collecting activities. The focus of this evaluation was to gauge perceptions of key stakeholders at the school in relation to the areas of the performance framework that are part of the evaluation. RER conducted focus group discussions with students, staff, and parents, as well as interviews with the school administration. These focus groups and interviews were conducted over a 2-day period, with the classroom observations, teacher and student focus groups, parent and leadership interviews, and the Special Education Audit completed on September 15 and 16, 2014.

Twelve classrooms were observed using the instrument provided by the Office of Education Innovation. Each observation lasted approximately 30 minutes, and over half of the teaching staff was observed once. Classroom observers spent 5.6 hours (336 minutes) observing 12 classrooms, 246 students, and 18 teachers. On average, each observation lasted 28 minutes and the observed student to teacher ratio was 13.66:1.

In the following report, standards and indicators are listed with relevant evidence given related to the performance criteria. Following the discussion of each indicator, a summary of strengths and areas for attention are provided for the core question.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

SOUTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE (SENSE)

<i>Core Question 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?</i>	<i>Finding</i>
<i>4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?</i>	Meets Standard
<i>4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.9 Is the school properly maintaining special education files for its special needs students?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.10 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to English as Second Language (ESL) students?</i>	Meets standard

Standard 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?

4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
Meets standard	The school: a) curriculum aligns with the state standards; b) conducts systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school regularly reviews scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) has a sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas that is prioritized and focuses on the core learning objectives; e) the staff understands and uniformly uses curriculum documents and related program materials to effectively deliver instruction; f) programs and materials are available to deliver the curriculum effectively.

SENSE uses the online curriculum tool CurriculumTrak to design and organize curriculum maps and lesson plans. CurriculumTrak offers a full complement of tools for teachers and school leaders to coordinate instruction across grades and within grades, as well as easy access to the state standards in electronic form. Thus, the SENSE curriculum is fully aligned to the state standard, with every lesson plan and every curriculum map examined fully aligned to the state standards (indicator a). In addition to providing a framework for lesson plans and curriculum maps, CurriculumTrak contains a full scope and sequence document for each content area (indicator c). The scope and sequence documents are comprehensive and easy to use, with each unit plan label in the scope and sequence summary a hotlink to the unit plan in question. In addition to the online scope and sequence, the grade level content was horizontally and vertically aligned during professional development during the summer. SENSE also offers teaching staff the option of looping with their class, which the teachers noted is helpful in ensuring vertical alignment between the grades. Both the looping and the completeness of the scope and sequence on CurriculumTrak help to ensure that the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas are prioritized and focused on core learning objectives (indicator d). An examination of the scope and sequence documents online confirms that they are focused on core learning objectives, and that there is a logical progression from one grade to the next.

The staff and leadership at SENSE conduct regular systematic review of the curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance (indicator b). Focus groups with the teaching staff revealed that grade level teams work together to design and review their curriculum. It was noted by the teaching staff that the vertical alignment, in particular, was useful in identifying new skills embedded within the new standards, as well as for finding any gaps in student performance from the past. This allows the teaching staff to scaffold new knowledge and provide additional instruction to fill in any gaps found. The teaching staff noted that during this process they received guidance from the leadership team, noting that "they trusted us to use the standards and the resources and build what we need." It was also noted that the development of curriculum is a process that allows them to "add new ideas and new creativity-- this helps with the curriculum and the evolution process... we aren't stuck to a particular book."

When asked about assessment and data usage, the teaching staff explained that individual student data is woven into the life of the school. Data talks and goal setting are the topics of the weekly professional learning community (PLC) meetings with the SENSE instructional coach. Each teacher is responsible for tracking and compiling their own classroom data, and the PLC meetings are often organized around student "data boards."

The classroom observations revealed that the teaching staff understood and uniformly used curriculum materials to deliver instruction (indicator e). The majority of the grade level curriculum maps provided for the document review revealed a focus on core learning objectives,. Both staff focus groups and classroom observations revealed that SENSE provides programs and materials to provide effective delivery of the curriculum (indicator f) with the teaching staff reporting that they had the materials necessary to provide a quality education and classroom observations revealing that each classroom contained reading materials and classroom supplies.

Areas of Strength: The curriculum of SENSE is fully aligned to the state standards and staff and leadership regularly review the curriculum to ensure that there are meeting the needs of their students.

The CurriculumTrak website is a valuable tool for SENSE teachers and leadership to develop and improve lesson plans, curriculum maps, and perform scope and sequence analyses.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the curriculum is implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery possesses the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities possess variety and/or use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) supplies sufficient feedback to staff on instructional practices.

The curriculum was implemented in the majority of the classrooms that were observed during the site visit (11 out of 12) as it was written on the lesson plans. Further, a document analysis of the lesson plans and curriculum maps revealed the classroom instruction followed the pace and guidance of the curriculum maps, with the classroom teachers providing instruction on the topics scheduled for that week in the curriculum maps (indicator a.) A review of the documents revealed that the majority of the curriculum maps were of high quality, with cohesive unit planning and very detailed plans for the semester. . The curriculum maps also clearly noted the Indiana State Standards. There were, however, several curriculum maps that did not contain much detail beyond the stated standards, and appeared to be repetitively using the same goals and core learning objectives. This may be a factor of the limited time frame between the release of the new Indiana standards and the beginning of the school year in which to revise and review the curriculum.

Core learning objectives were posted in 9 out of 12 classroom observations, and an examination of the lesson plans revealed that core learning objectives were specifically noted in all. As delivered, classroom instruction did focus on core learning objectives (indicator b). Interestingly, the majority of these core learning objects posted in the classrooms were in the form of "I can" statements, which the teaching staff reported was a focus of the PLC professional development.

Classroom observations revealed that the pace of instruction provided the appropriate rigor and challenge in 11 out of 12 classroom observed (indicator c). Student engagement was uniformly high across the observations. A variety of classroom instructional techniques were noted during the classroom observations, most notably with small group work, worksheets, class projects and direct instruction being observed (indicator d).

Finally, a rigorous system of formal and informal classroom observations, curriculum reviews, and meetings support the staff and provide feedback from leadership. SENSE utilizes the

observe4success online observation and feedback system, with the Principal, Ms. Kristie Sweeney, and the two assistant principals, Ms. Amie Bowman and Ms. Alisa Kaczorowski, performing all of the classroom observations and walkthroughs (indicator e). A review of the documents currently available on the observe4success system revealed that the online observation system is being used both for more traditional observations that are designed to evaluate all aspects of the classroom and teaching such as classroom appearance, classroom culture and classroom management (e.g., the opening year walkthrough) or classroom observations that are designed to examine more specific classroom practices, such as the use of "I can" statements. The observation forms included a mix of check-off boxes and written comments. The written comments offered a balanced mix of positive comments that noted areas of best-practices, and more constructively critical statements that clearly noted areas for improvement and usually offered strategies that could be used to address a potential weakness. The teachers reported that these observations were online for them to examine within a very short time after the observation was complete.

Areas of Strength: SENSE is providing a rigorous education for their students, with quality lessons that include a variety of classroom instruction strategies.

SENSE is to be applauded for using online tools, such as CurriculumTrak and observ4success.com, to provide feedback to teachers on the quality of instruction, as well as organizational tools for curriculum development.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Meets standard	The school: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are accurate and useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are received by classroom teachers in a timely and useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments have sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is sufficient frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.

SENSE uses data driven instruction throughout the curriculum. The school uses ISTEP, iREAD, Acuity and mClass, as well as in class assessments designed by the teaching staff. Acuity is administered three times a year in the fall, winter and spring and the data is used for benchmarking (indicators a, c & d). The teaching staff reported that they perform a variety of formal and informal assessments, and that they receive the results of the standardized testing promptly and in a format that they can use. It was noted that mClass assessments are particularly useful, so much so that the SENSE school-wide goals are formulated based on the TRC component of mClass. The teaching staff reported that standardized assessments are received very soon after the testing is completed (indicator b), with both the mClass and Acuity scores being available as soon as students finish the test. ISTEP and iRead data are distributed to the teaching staff quickly after it is received by the school leadership.

As noted in Standard 1, each instructor is responsible for the compilation of their own data. The use of data is of great importance in the professional development offered during PLC's, and drives the discussion through data talks, data boards and goal setting through the use of data. In addition to using student assessment data as part of their own professional development, students are also encouraged to track their own progress using assessment data. Students are responsible for completing their own data trackers, and to use that data to formulate their own learning goals. Additionally, students are encouraged to reflect on the steps necessary to reach their goal. Thus, assessment results are used to guide individual classroom instruction (indicator e), from the level of student use of their own data to inform their learning, to the level of the use of data during faculty professional development.

Areas of Strength: SENSE uses to data to inform practice at all levels of the curriculum. The use of data has become part of the school culture, with students taking part in completing data trackers and setting their own goals.

Professional development focuses on data use to improve instruction, with each classroom teacher responsible for compiling their own data.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) hiring processes are organized and used to support the success of new staff members; b) the school deploys sufficient number of faculty and staff to maximize instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) is related to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD opportunities are determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.

All teachers at SENSE are certified or credentialed in their teaching area. The majority of the teachers are teaching a course load that appears manageable, and the various staff members have distinct roles. The teachers are all teaching in areas in which they are certified. Overall, the staff is deployed to best utilize their skills and training (indicators b & c). In particular, the leadership has done an exceptional job in leveraging the use of Title 1 funds by providing Highly Qualified licensed teachers as Title 1 staff to best benefit all SENSE students.

It was reported during teacher focus group interviews that the hiring process were supportive of new faculty members, and further that new faculty members felt supported by the school leadership as well as by their teaching colleagues (indicator a). Specifically, new faculty reported that they benefitted from the new staff training day, as well as the practice of meeting regularly with Ms. Bowman to discuss any issues they may be having with the curriculum, classroom management or transitions to teaching at SENSE. They also noted that the leadership team is always available throughout the building and were always willing to answer questions or provide expertise.

Professional development is a combination of weekly PLC meetings and First Wednesdays, an hour and half of professional development time in which guest speakers are often brought in to SENSE. The teachers reported receiving training from Smekens Education as well. Further, the staff meets at grade level once a week to discuss student data. The teaching staff reported they were particularly happy with the professional development offerings, noting that the school leadership had sent out a survey asking staff what they needed for professional development, and organizing

the monthly professional development meetings around the students' needs as determined by the teaching staff. In fact, they noted that "we have more than the usual amount of input to the leadership regarding professional development." As noted by Ms. Sweeney, "PLC Data talks drive teachers to make conscious and informed recommendations for the professional learning opportunities provided (by the school). All PD is intentional and can be supported by student data. We empower teachers as professionals to use, analyze, and hypothesize best practice methods to support intentional learning" (indicator e). It was conveyed during the focus group that the leadership team does actively examine school-wide data, and that when issues are found they "reach out to individual staff if that's where the issue is, and they will also recognize individual faculty for their accomplishments."

Another aspect of the professional development of the teaching staff is the "Placemat," which is a laminated sheet, about the size of a placemat, that contains graphical summaries of the current initiatives ongoing at SENSE. These initiatives include Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop, the principles of highly effective teaching, gradual release of responsibility, characteristics of a highly effective learning environment, Rigor/Relevance Framework, Differentiating Instruction, Checks for Understanding, and the Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning. The Placemat is revised and updated every year. The Placemat itself is an ingenious way to summarize many of the evidence-based best practices for classroom instruction in action at SENSE and serves as a handy reminder of the principles of each of these best practices. Conversations with Ms. Sweeney, Ms. Bowman and Ms. Kaczorowski revealed that each of the best-practices was related to each other and formed a logical and cohesive whole that guided instruction and professional development (both current and past) for the school. However, it was conveyed by some staff members that "it gets a bit overwhelming...I do a little piece and make that a focus... for example, I am evolving in my use of readers and writers workshop, so I focus on that for a bit." Others noted that "it may seem like a lot, but it makes me think through how I can work smarter and how I can change what I'm doing and work differently."

The teacher evaluation plan is in accordance with the requirements of the Rise evaluation system, with moderate changes being made by the leadership team. As reported in focus groups and interviews, the teacher evaluation system is regularly implemented and understood by the staff and leadership. There are clear processes and criteria for the evaluation plan and the teaching staff reported that both formal and informal evaluations are completed on a regular and frequent basis(indicator f). The observation protocol includes a preconference, and then soon after the class observation. It was noted by one teacher that "we will have the observation on Wednesday (for example) and she will stay 30 to 45 minutes, and as soon as she leaves the room we can get feedback online which will highlight areas of concern and tell us what we're doing well."

Areas of Strength: New teaching staff report feeling supported by their fellow teachers and school leadership.

The "placemat" summary of current school initiatives provides a useful summary and organizing tool for lesson development and classroom instruction, and reflects the overall vision of the leadership team for SENSE. Sharing this vision on a regular basis with the teaching staff would be a valuable way to instigate discussions and a deeper understanding the overall vision for the school.

The current teacher evaluation system is in place and providing good information to staff and leadership, with the teaching staff reporting satisfaction with both the process and the outcome of the evaluation.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>both</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Meets standard	The school: a) has a mission that is shared by all stakeholders; b) has stakeholders possessing widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.

The School Mission is fully articulated in the materials online and in communication with stakeholders. Interviews with staff and parents of students at SENSE revealed that they view the mission of SENSE similarly. Specifically, they see SENSE as a community, or "family" as more than one stakeholder said, where the teachers know the students well and also know their families. The students noted that the teachers know all of them well, "even teachers I haven't had yet know my name and say hi," as one student put it. The teaching staff also noted that part of the school mission is to help each child succeed and to meet their individual needs. In particular, they value the freedom that the school gives them to adapt to the needs of their students, noting that "here I have the chance to have an input into the way they deliver instruction and I can make choices to do what's best for the kids."

Areas of Strength: All of the stakeholders in SENSE understand and share the mission of the school.

Stakeholders value SENSE as a neighborhood school, where everyone knows and supports each other.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address them: a) The school does not have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach does not possess high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are disrespectful and/or unsupportive and there are non-existing or unclear processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are unprofessional and/or unproductive.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address it: a) The school does not have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach does not possess high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are disrespectful and/or unsupportive and there are non-existing or unclear processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are unprofessional and /or unproductive.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the school has clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach possesses high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are respectful and supportive and faculty and students are clear about processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are professional and constructive.

SENSE has clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior (indicator a). These rules are clearly explicated in the student handbook, which includes a clear policy on bullying, sexual harassment, the use of technology as well as a complete student code of conduct and discipline policy. The discipline policy focuses on reinforcing positive behaviors as the first step toward a school culture that supports student learning. Additionally, the discipline plan encourages preventive action rather than corrective action to encourage students, rather than punish them. As a whole, the discipline policy possesses high expectations for student behavior (indicator b). It was noted during focus group interviews, however, that many members of the SENSE community do not know that there is a written policy in the student handbook, with one noting that "I think there is one in the student handbook-- but it's vague and general."

Focus group interviews with the SENSE teaching staff and SENSE students revealed that interactions between the staff and students are respectful and supportive. The current discipline policy is being applied across the grades using two different representational systems. Lower grades employ a color coding system where student "clips" are moved from one color to another based on their behavior, while the upper grades use a point system aligned to "Class Dojo," an iPad app that uploads to the student data portal on the web so that parents can view their student's behavior for the day. Despite the use of two different representational systems across the school, there does not seem to be any confusion within each grade level or within the student body. As one teacher noted, "as hard as it is for parents, the kids understand it... the kids know what the policy is and they know what is expected of them and they know how to behave." A strength of the current approach that was noted by a classroom teacher is that the two discipline schemes are "very differentiated and very tailored to individual students.. they have the color system if they (the teachers) want to use it, or Class Dojo." The teaching faculty reported that relationships between faculty and the administration are professional and constructive (indicator d).

Areas of Strength: Staff, students and the school leadership are all in agreement regarding the positive behaviors expected of the students.

While the school currently operates using two different representations of the discipline plan (color system or Class Dojo), the students and staff all understand the underlying discipline policy and the positive behaviors expected of students.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Meets standard	The school: a) has active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) utilizes communications that are both timely and relevant to the parental concerns; c) communicates student academic progress and achievement in reports that are understood by parents; d) the school's communication methods are designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., communicating in parents' native languages, not communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at convenient times for parents).

Parents who attended the parent focus groups reported that they were very satisfied with the education that their children were receiving, as well as the behavior plan, school culture and community that has developed in the school. Parents also reported that they received many timely and useful communications from the leadership and teaching staff at SENSE (indicator b). One teacher noted "the staff is great-- we have great communication with the teachers, and we know all the teachers." They did note, however, that although the Facebook page was very useful and up to date, that the webpage had not been updated recently. They noted that the communications from teachers regarding their students were ongoing and active, and that they are well aware of how their students are performing at SENSE, either through the online grade portal or formal and informal communications from the teaching staff (indicators a & d). Parents also noted that the student academic progress is clearly explained and conveyed to them through easy to understand report cards and parent-teacher conferences (substandard c). It was also noted that the parents whose children used Class Dojo found it very useful and they particularly appreciated the daily updates on the webpage and the app. They did not express any confusion with the different discipline representations being used at SENSE.

In particular, parents noted that they felt that their students had developed strong bonds to the staff at SENSE, with one parent noting that when they moved their student to a new school "he cried and wanted to come back to SENSE--- here we know everybody and there he saw more kids and lots of different people. He feels safe here-- I know everybody and he knows every single kid." They also noted the positive benefits of teacher looping on their children, with the practice resulting in stronger ties between students and their teachers. As one parent noted "not many (students) will

open themselves up like that to others-- but these teachers know them and they (the students) will work harder for them."

Areas of Strength: Parent satisfaction is very high, and the parents value the education their children are receiving at SENSE.

Recommendations: None at this time.

4.9. Do the school's special education files demonstrate that it is in legal compliance and is moving towards best practice?	
Does not meet standard	The school's special education files present concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) do not adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; b) each need identified within the IEP does not have a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; c) all goals are not rigorous or based on state or national learning standards; d) evidence does not demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student developed; e) specifically designed curriculum is not outlined.
Approaching standard	The school's special education files present concerns in <u>one</u> or more of the following areas: a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) do not adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; b) each need identified within the IEP does not have a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; c) all goals are not rigorous or based on state or national learning standards; d) evidence does not demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student developed; e) specifically designed curriculum is not outlined.
Meets standard	All of the following are evident in the school's special education files: a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; b) each need identified within the IEP has a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; c) each goal is rigorous and is based on state and national learning standards; d) explicit evidence exists to demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student develops; e) specifically designed curriculum is outlined.

Sense Charter School: Fall, 2014

Special Education Audit

Azure DS Angelov, Ph.D.

Meets: All of the following are evident in the school's special education files: (a) services outlined within Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) adequately match the exceptional needs of the student; (b) each need identified within the IEP has a corresponding goal and plan for assessment; (c) each goal is rigorous and is based on state and national learning standards; (d) explicit evidence exists to demonstrate that goals have evolved each year as the student develops; (e) specifically designed curriculum is outlined.

SENSE is a k-8 building offering legally compliant special education services. File audits revealed that IEPs were written to a legally compliant quality (4.9 a,b,c,d,e). An RTI process is in place and highly qualified special education teachers are implementing the special education services. The principal currently serves as the 504 coordinator for the building. The staff shared that they are working with the state DOE transition designee to enhance their transition plans. Thinking about how they will implement the new special education state assessment in the spring will be their next big opportunity to grow.

The Special Education team was singled out for praise by both the teaching staff and parents. One parent noted that the high quality education their special needs student receives is a major strength of SENSE, while the teaching staff summed up their feelings by noting "we have the best special education team in the state-- they are kind of awesome."

4.10. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?

Does not meet standard	The school is <u>not</u> fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires substantial improvement in order to achieve conditions such as the following: a) appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; b) relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Approaching standard	The school is not yet completely fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires <i>some</i> (but not considerable) improvement to fully achieve conditions such as the following: a) appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; b) relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, as indicated by conditions such as the following: a) appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; b) relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.

Not applicable.

Appendix :

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence (SENSE)

Classroom Observation Summary

Twelve classrooms were observed using the instrument provided by the Office of Education Innovation. Each observation lasted approximately 30 minutes, and over half of the teaching staff was observed once. Classroom observers spent 5.6 hours (336 minutes) observing 12 classrooms, 246 students, and 18 teachers. On average, each observation lasted 28 minutes and the observed student to teacher ratio was 13.66:1.

Classroom Environment

75.0% (9/12) had posted objectives. 91.6% (11/12) had posted state standards. 91.6% (11/12) used critical vocabulary. 91.6% (11/12) had challenging content. 91.6% (11/12) exhibited differentiation. 100.0% (12/12) of the instruction observed built on prior knowledge.

Learning Environment

The observers categorized observed learning experiences into four main categories. 100% (12/12) of observed activities were Remember/Understand Activities. 83.3% (10/12) were Apply/Perform Activities. 8.3% (1/12) was Analyze/Evaluate Activities. 0% (0/12) were Create/Design Activities. 0% (0/12) of activities were found to be ineffective.

75.0% (9/12) of classrooms contained rich print materials. 75.0% (9/12) showed examples of exemplary work. 91.6% (11/12) displayed a daily schedule. 100% (12/12) had posted behavior expectations. 0% (0/12) had culturally relevant materials.

Behavior Management

The site team observed proactive and reactive techniques. The site team recorded 12 (100%) classrooms using proactive discipline. 12 (100%) classrooms using reactive discipline were recorded. Student engagement was fairly consistent. Please see the table below.

Site Visit Classroom Observations

Number of Site Visitors: 2

Total Time Observing (Min)	Average Time in Classroom
336	28

Students Observed	Teachers Observed	Ratio (S:1T)
246	18	13.66

Topic of Lesson	
Mean, Median, Mode	Graphing
Story Structure	Economics
Math	Reading (Harry Potter)
Nouns & Adjectives	Reading Block
Story Structure	Graphic Organizers
Pointilism	Positional Words

Proportion of Students Engaged During:	All		Most		Half		Few		None	
	#	% Total	#	% Total	#	% Total	#	% Total	#	% Total
Beginning of Lesson	2	16.6%	10	83.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
First Interval	2	16.6%	10	83.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Second Interval	0	0.0%	12	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Third Interval	0	0.0%	12	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
End of Lesson	0	0.0%	12	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%